



Spreading Cheer for All to Hear: Family at Village of Hope Experiences the Joy of Giving

The holiday season is often a happy and hopeful time for all of us. This is especially true for homeless men, women and children living at Orange County Rescue Mission's Village of Hope. It is a time of year that demonstrates life after homelessness and often one of the first holiday experiences these individuals and families share.



This year looked a bit different for everyone, including Orange County Rescue Mission, who was forced to cancel its traditional holiday celebrations. That said, there was one tradition they did not want to give up, and that was spreading holiday cheer for all their residents through its annual gift giving celebration among family and friends.

This year's gift exchange was especially important to Theresa, a resident of Village of Hope, and her three children. As a single mom, Theresa came to the Rescue Mission determined to get her life back on track and to provide a better life to her two sons and daughter. Addiction had taken over her life and she was terrified of losing her children—until she found hope at Orange County Rescue Mission.

"The Rescue Mission gave us food, clothing for my kids, and basic necessities, but they also gave us so much more, including some of the best Christmas' we've ever had," says Theresa.

Before finding the Rescue Mission, Theresa recalls barely having enough money to pay rent at her apartment and put food on the table for her family, so Christmas was always a rough time for her as she was not able to give gifts to her children.

Each year, Orange County Rescue Mission reaches out to the local community and asks for donations of items that can be gifted to both children and adults for Christmas. Residents are then able to essentially "shop" for gifts to give to their families. These donations give children the opportunity to experience the joy of giving gifts to their parents and parents to their children – many for the first time.

"The joy of getting to watch my children open gifts on Christmas morning was something I will never forget," says Theresa. "It may seem small in the grand scheme of things, but it is a moment I will cherish for the rest of my life. It is something that reminded me that there is life after homelessness and that we will be okay. It gave us all a bit of hope more than anything else and that is something that is extremely important."

Although this was not Theresa and her family's first Christmas at the Rescue Mission, there are many others like her and her family. This reminds us that the holidays are a time of giving and giving back. If you are interested in donating to the Rescue Mission, please click here: [Ways to Donate | Rescue Mission](#).